



For immediate release

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Lewis and Clark Public Health Coordinating County-wide Vaccine Distribution

Helena – Lewis and Clark Public Health will serve as the coordinating entity for the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccine in the county, bringing together several representatives from local health organizations and business entities, to ensure a smooth and efficient administration to residents.

The Local COVID-19 Vaccine Coordination Team includes representatives from St. Peter's Health, PureView Health Center, Helena Indian Alliance/Leo Pocha Clinic, the VA Hospital, the county's local Elkhorn Community Organizations Active in Disaster or Elkhorn COAD, and local and state Disaster and Emergency Services. In addition, representatives from Walmart, Costco, CVS, Walgreens, Albertsons, and Safeway pharmacies attend the meetings. The group's work is ongoing and has established several priorities for vaccine distribution, including point of distribution (POD) development, logistics, communication and messaging to the community.

The local team will weigh recommendations from the CDC and other state and federal agencies when rolling out vaccine to individuals in the county. As the local coordinating agency, Lewis and Clark Public Health will take the lead in answering community questions related to the different phases of local vaccine distribution and administration.

Based on guidance from the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), COVID-19 vaccine will be rolled out in Lewis and Clark County in several phases. The county is currently in the early stages of Vaccine Phase 1a; at this time the vaccine is only available to frontline healthcare workers and residents of long-term care facilities but will soon expand to encompass all eligible healthcare personnel in the county. St. Peter's Health was one of the first to receive the Pfizer vaccine in our community. The healthcare system is using the initial shipment to inoculate their employees and medical staff to ensure they're able to continue to provide necessary healthcare to the community. There is currently no direct distribution to the general public.

On December 20, ACIP released recommendations for Phases 1b and 1c. The completion of phase 1a and the start of 1b is expected to begin in the county in the coming weeks and will include additional healthcare workers and frontline essential workers. More information regarding specific groups in Phase 1b will be released later. In addition, information regarding POD locations, timing, priority populations to be served within each phase of vaccine distribution, and other information, will be released by Lewis and Clark Public Health as it becomes available.

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Also, be aware of emergency warning

signs of severe COVID-19 disease. Individuals showing any of the following signs or symptoms should seek emergency medical care immediately: trouble breathing, persistent pressure or pain in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face coloring.

For the most current available data on local COVID-19 cases, view the Local COVID-19 Decision Making Dashboard at www.lccountymt.gov/health/covid-19/local-covid-19-decision-making-dashboard.html.

Preventing and controlling local COVID-19 is dependent on personal responsibility and individual choices that residents of our county can make to protect our community. Lewis and Clark Public Health continues to urge people to do the right thing to protect our community, practice what has been learned over the last few months, such as physical distancing, wearing a face covering, avoiding large gatherings, washing hands, and sanitizing surfaces to protect ourselves and others.

If you have questions, please call Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8900.

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